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Abstract

The New School for Behavioral Studies in Education is demonstrating alternative approaches to elementary school instruction and teacher preparation in North Dakota. It is establishing a cooperative working relationship with participating school districts through a teacher exchange program in which less-than-degree teachers are released to complete their college education in exchange for fully certified teachers enrolled in a master's level internship. Interns attempt to create new learning environments through individualization of instruction and introduction of a variety of materials and techniques. As a model of the type of education environment it is promoting, the school concentrates on the quality of its student-teacher relationships and the individualization of its program. A nondepartmental structure involving faculty from various disciplines contributes to integration of the general-professional, content-methodology, and theory-practice components. The undergraduate program (junior and senior year) has six units: Creative Expression, Nature and Conditions of Learning, Quantitative Reasoning, Modes of Communication, Human Responses to Environment, and Contemporary Issues in Education. The master's program includes seminars and independent research besides the resident internship. The total effort is supported by a program of research to determine the effects of the preparatory program and the mode of instruction being introduced into the cooperating schools. (JS)

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A DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW SCHOOL

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

A Summary Statement

Prepared For Distribution

at the

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North Dakota, a large State with a relatively small population, faces educational problems that are unique to a predominantly rural setting. Recognizing that comprehensive long range planning is necessary for educational improvement, the Legislative Research Committee recommended that a comprehensive examination of the educational problems of North Dakota be initiated. The Statewide Study,[1] begun in 1965, was undertaken as a cooperative effort of the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, the University of North Dakota, the Legislative Research Committee, the State Board of Higher Education, the United States Office of Education, and a number of local school districts. The Study, which was completed in 1968, dealt with all phases of elementary and secondary education and with teacher education. Many recommendations were made which aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the State's public school system.

Among the many recommendations coming from the Plan for Educational Development was the proposal for the establishment of a new kind of elementary teacher preparation program for both prospective and experienced elementary school teachers. In the spring of 1968 the State Board of Higher Education authorized the establishment of the New School for Behavioral Studies in Education as a college component of the University of North Dakota.[2] To help initiate this

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[1] The published materials of the Statewide Study of Education are reproduced in six volumes. Copies of these documents are available through the Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, State Capitol, Bismarck, North Dakota.

[2] The New School elementary teacher preparation program begins in the third or junior college year and continues for three years. Students from the regular college program who have completed a minimum of two years of general college work are eligible, as are experienced, less-than-degree teachers returning to complete their undergraduate education. Upon successful completion of the undergraduate phase of the program, students receive a baccalaureate degree and full teacher certification. The majority of graduating seniors then proceed to the Master's level program which has as its core a year-long resident internship in a cooperating school district. In addition, fellows are enrolled in a doctoral program designed to prepare "teachers of teachers."

program, the University of North Dakota received financial assistance from the United States Office of Education.

The compelling task for elementary education in the State of North Dakota is to prepare essentially rural children for productive and useful lives in what is rapidly becoming an urbanized society. To meet the challenge, North Dakota schools will be examining and evaluating their instructional programs to see if they are entirely relevant to the educational needs of the State. The New School is assisting in that examination and evaluation by demonstrating alternative approaches to elementary school instruction and teacher preparation which it feels are more appropriate to the needs of elementary school children and teachers in the State. By introducing a new program in teacher education, it is believed that worthwhile changes can be effected in the character of public education in the State and in so doing perhaps influence the character of teacher education in the nation.

THE UNIVERSITY AND THE COMMUNITY

A major purpose for the establishment of the New School is that it become an instrument for constructive change in the schools of North Dakota. Seldom do teacher education programs, even those that are considered most innovative, have a significant impact upon public education in the regions they serve. Typically, institutions of higher learning are isolated from the communities in which they reside. That portion of a university committed to the preparation of teachers likewise is most often removed from the societal forces that effect changes in the public schools. Through the establishment of cooperative working relationships with participating school districts in the State, the New School will work to bridge the isolation that traditionally exists between the University and local communities.

Teacher Exchange Program

A factor leading to the establishment of closer ties between the cooperating school districts and the New School is the desire to upgrade the preparation levels of less-than-degree elementary school teachers currently teaching in North Dakota elementary schools. These schools are staffed predominantly by less-than-degree teachers.[3] To help correct this condition, the New School is working jointly with cooperating school districts and with the support of the State's key educational institutions and agencies to introduce a statewide

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[3] In 1966 nearly 2,500 or 59% of the State's elementary school teachers lacked a four-year college education; they were all certified to teach. Most less-than-degree teachers are employed by small school districts; however, up to 20% of teachers in the State's six largest districts still do not have a baccalaureate degree.

educational program which aims at placing a qualified teacher in every elementary classroom in the State by 1975. Most essential to the achievement of this objective is the teacher exchange program developed in cooperation with local school districts and the State Department of Public Instruction. Under this arrangement a school district which formally agrees to participate with the New School temporarily releases a portion of its less-than-degree teachers so that they may complete their college education.[4] Each of these teachers is replaced by a fully-qualified and certified teacher who is concurrently enrolled in a master's level program in the New School. The less-than-degree teacher who is released from the cooperating district is enrolled at an appropriate academic level in the New School's undergraduate teacher preparation program and remains until his course of study has been completed.

The result of the teacher exchange program is that a close working relationship is established between the New School and individual school districts. The New School accepts increased responsibility for the quality of instruction in those classrooms staffed by New School resident interns; the cooperating school districts become a more active participant in the teacher preparation process. Thus, each shares more in the responsibilities which have traditionally belonged to the other.

An Alternative Learning Environment for the Elementary Classroom

There would be limited value in taking experienced teachers out of the elementary school classroom and placing them in a college program with inexperienced,

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[4] These experienced, less-than-degree teachers are selected jointly by the local school district and the New School; participation by these teachers is voluntary. As part of the initial arrangement, the cooperating school district agrees to accept the experienced teacher with upgraded preparation and the experienced teacher in turn agrees to return to the district from which he came for a minimum of one year.

prospective teacher unless that program led to significant changes in teacher practices. Such a program would have to reflect an increased understanding of the processes of learning and their implications for teaching. Furthermore, it would have to contribute toward insuring the implementation of those insights gained. The New School program is organized to meet those objectives.

It is becoming increasingly evident that children's learning is enhanced if it is centered upon a child's own experiences, needs and interests, and where children participate in the direction of their own learning activities. Most North Dakota schools, indeed most schools throughout the country, do not function on the basis of that understanding.

> At the present time, in most schools many rigidly controlled stipulations must be accepted by everyone who enters their portals. Basically, the school's learning experiences are imposed, involuntary, and structured. The pupil becomes a captive audience from the day of entry. His hours are regulated; his movements in the building and within the classroom are controlled; his right to speak out freely is curtailed. He is subject to countless restrictions about the days to attend, hours to fill, when to talk, where to sit, length of teaching periods, and countless other rules. /5/

School is not always related to the experiences of the child outside school. Seldom does it capitalize upon the child's intrinsic interest in learning. Neither does it fully nurture the inquiring, imaginative spirit typically found in children. As Rabindranath Tagore described school:

> It was a special arrangement for giving lessons. It could only be suitable for grown-up people who are conscious of the special need of such places and therefore are ready to accept their teaching at the cost of disassociation of life. The children are in love with life, and it is their first love. All its color and movement attract their eager attention. Are we quite sure of our wisdom in stifling this love? /6/

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[5] Living and Learning, The Report of the Provincial Committee on Aims and Objectives of Education in the Schools of Toronto, Ontario Department of Education, 1968, p. 54.

[6] As quoted in Albert Cullum's Push Back The Desks (New York: Citation Press, 1967), p. 3.

The New School believes that this love need not be stifled in a school setting. It supports the belief that all learning experiences can be exciting; that boredom, disinterestedness, and indifference need not be a part of any school's environment; that each child's educational needs be considered as paramount and that flexibility so permeate these schools that the interests, abilities and needs of each child be taken into account. The New School program aims at fostering this spirit of individualization among the teachers it prepares, both experienced and prospective.

Central to the creation of a more individualized instructional mode in the elementary classroom is the provision for a variety of learning environments. Children in classrooms directed by New School resident interns can develop their skills, understandings, and appreciations, in a number of interest centers established in different content and skill areas appropriate to the particular age levels of the children involved. A multiplicity and variety of curriculum materials, tools, and other stimuli which children themselves can produce and manipulate are provided in those centers. Children engage in a variety of activities working both individually and in small groups. Student progress is at a rate appropriate to each student's capacities, interests, and stage of development rather than at a rate prescribed either by teacher, curriculum, or graded groupings. In this type of setting direct teaching is limited. The teacher's primary role is one of observing, stimulating, and assisting children in their learning. In this setting, teachers must be prepared to diagnose most common learning problems that children have and be prepared to work with individual children on those problems.

Being involved in individualized activities appropriate to their degree of maturation and background, children often find the need to work together in

mixed age groups on problems of individual and collective concern. In New School classrooms each child is encouraged in his learning to broaden his vista beyond his immediate age group and classroom environment. An ungraded pattern of organization often facilitates this added dimension of pupil-pupil interaction. When properly managed by New School interns, it permits older pupils to help the younger, the brighter to assist the duller; it also encourages the development of appropriate self-discipline without undue reliance upon the authority of the teacher. Often ungraded instructional units will lend themselves to an enhancement of New School efforts in a local community. For North Dakota has many schools that are so small as to make a graded pattern of organization inefficient and uneconomical, while broad ungraded units can be achieved quite readily. Certainly, if local schools focus their attention on individualizing the instructional program, then the graded structure no longer will have the same viability.

NEW SCHOOL AS A MODEL

An institution of higher learning, if it is to be effective in contributing to a change in the educational fabric of its society, must itself become a model of the kind of educational environment it is promoting. The New School is cooperating with local school districts to introduce more individualized modes of instruction into their schools. To prepare teachers for this task, it is essential that they too experience an individualized program of instruction in their own college studies. Elementary school education is not so different from education at the university level that similar learning environments cannot be created. Educational agencies at both levels must respond to the need for a more humanizing education, an education which respects the individuality of each student while preparing him for an active life in society.

Student-Teacher Relationships

The New School is especially concerned about the quality of student-teacher relationships in the design and operation of its educational program. There is a great need to encourage the development of more cooperative, nonthreatening relationships between students and faculty and to promote better communication between them. One way in which the New School hopes to improve the quality of student-teacher relationships is by encouraging greater assumption of responsibility by students for their own learning. To facilitate this objective, each student is encouraged to assume a larger share of the responsibility for defining and evaluating his educational efforts in each course. The student works jointly with his teachers toward increasing his ability to intelligently define educational goals and evaluate his own academic progress. The structuring

of student activities within each course area is made only after the student and instructor have engaged in thoughtful examination of the student's academic and professional background, his present needs and expectations, and the educational objectives of the New School. Special attention is given to increasing the flexibility in the way a student reaches his goals and the period of time he needs to achieve those goals.

Instructional Program

The New School, through its approach to instruction, strives to become a model of the kind of educational environment it is promoting in the elementary school. New School students formally enroll in similar courses of study; but within these broad course areas, each student is encouraged to assume greater initiative and independence in his learning. Formal classroom instruction is deemphasized; independent study, small group seminars and clinical experiences predominate.

All instructional activities are student-oriented; that is to say the student, not the teacher, is placed at the center of the educational process. Emphasis is shifted from teaching to learning. The student initiates the inquiry while the instructor guides and assists that inquiry from his own academic orientation. This approach toward instruction seems particularly appropriate to teacher preparation in that, if teachers essentially teach as they themselves are taught, prospective elementary teachers will be better prepared to inculcate a spirit and capacity for inquiry and discovery among elementary school children.

In a New School elementary classroom most of the learning experiences originate from activities that reach beyond particular disciplines. Along with the development of the skills of communication, elementary school children are

introduced to experiences which exhibit the interrelatedness of all knowledge. Similarly, the academic program in the New School is structured so as to point directions for what is to be learned without imposing rigid subject matter restrictions for that learning. Another desired outcome in the elementary school classroom is the creation of an appropriate mixture of reflective and active kinds of activities. Students in the New School also participate in a combination of active and reflective activities. This need originates partly from the desire to relate what is learned in the classroom with practice in clinical situations and partly from the belief that all students should engage in some form of creative expression.

The New School believes that in a modern elementary school setting teachers must share a large degree of the responsibility for the design as well as the implementation of learning. They must not be so confined by courses of study, textbooks, examinations, and administrators that they are unable to participate in the creative task of guiding the learning process. As future teachers they must be permitted to experiment and innovate in both content and methodology. To foster this spirit, New School students are encouraged to participate in shaping the educational environment that effects them.

GENERAL AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

The New School strives to educate students to acquire the qualities of mind and behavior which will assist them in nurturing creative tendencies in the young. The kind of person envisioned is first of all a well educated and mature adult with a professional commitment to elementary education. He is a person who is professionally trained and committed to working with children as individuals.

Teacher preparation programs, which attempt to meet these broad educational objectives, generally divide the college curriculum into two parts, namely, general education and professional education. One very practical reason for this separation is that most colleges and universities are organized into divisions of liberal and professional studies. A natural consequence of this kind of organization is a teacher preparation program which is segmented, resulting in a lack of integration or unity. Often the only remedy possible under these conditions is the creation of an all-university committee charged with the responsibility of overseeing the total program. The New School is working to minimize this separation between liberal and professional education by designing into its program a quality of integration and unity not found in most teacher preparation programs.

Faculty Organization

The New School has no divisions or departments. It has but one structural unit which brings together faculty members with many diverse academic backgrounds. They all have one common commitment, namely, to prepare the best possible

elementary teacher. All participate in the shaping of the total academic program. Because of its structural organization, the New School is able to offer a program which promises close coordination and interaction among its elements. The result is a greater degree of flexibility which in turn stimulates more imaginative resolutions of educational dichotomies.

To achieve this sense of unity and integration, the New School has drawn together persons with the necessary academic preparation and teaching experience in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, mathematics, and education. Some hold rank within other departments and colleges within the University. The faculty chosen for this program have an expressed interest in study and research in education. They also need to have the psychological predisposition to work in a program that is not highly structured and the competence and experience to work effectively with students both individually and in small groups; they will need to reach beyond the narrow confines of the disciplines in which they were trained. And most important they must be nonauthoritarian in their approach to education.

Academic Program

Often the division between general and professional education is supported by the distinction made between subject matter and teaching methodology. The content to be learned is generally assigned as part of general education while methodology finds its place in professional education. Again, the New School is attempting to move beyond such artificial separations. A conscious effort is made to integrate content with methodology, both within and between courses. Frequently, New School students gain new understandings in a subject matter area while pursuing questions of how those understandings might be introduced

to children.

The New School undergraduate curriculum is modeled to a large degree after those broad curriculum areas found in the elementary school. These areas include modes of communication, creative expression, and quantitative reasoning. In addition to study in these areas, students will focus on the processes of learning and the cultural forces that influence that learning. The undergraduate portion of the academic program encompasses six areas in which each student is encouraged to develop his own valued interests and competence. These basic units include:

Creative Expression

A student-oriented seminar in the humanities and the arts continuing through the junior and senior years. Major consideration is given to man's creative expression in literature, philosophy, drama, music and art. During the sequence students will actively participate in the arts and will gain considerable experience in creative writing.

Nature and Conditions of Learning

An extensive analysis of the nature of learning and those conditions that enhance or inhibit its development. Also included is an integrated series of laboratory experiences, involving students in actual elementary classroom learning situations. The laboratory experiences will begin early and culminate in an internship in a cooperating school district.

Quantitative Reasoning

An examination of those concepts and generalizations related to the "new" mathematics and process-oriented science being introduced into elementary schools. Considerable attention will be given to those strategies used in developing children's abilities to reason, inquire, and discover through mathematics and science.

Modes of Communication

An ongoing inquiry into the objectives, methods and materials of the language arts with special focus upon those strategies involved in effectively developing the communication skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Students will also be involved in coordinated laboratory experiences working with elementary school children.

Human responses to Environment

A broad and general examination of man's responses to his environment. The understanding gained, in turn, will be utilized in the study of the cultural responses of the people of the Great Plains to a changing environment.

Contemporary Issues in Education

An independent readings course designed to encourage individual exploration of significant issues in American education.

THEORY AND PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

The New School strongly believes that the skills necessary for effective teaching are developed to a large extent through participation with elementary school children. In many teacher education programs, prospective teachers gain little or no practical experience beyond their student teaching. And then that experience occurs most often near the very end of the student's education. An unfortunate consequence is a lack of connection between what is learned in the college classroom and practical experience gained from working directly with children. The New School seeks to improve upon this condition by offering its students early, frequent, and extended experiences with children. Serious efforts are made to tie these practical experiences to the student's academic studies.

During the first two years of the program, New School students are involved in an integrated series of clinical experiences with children in elementary school settings. Some of these are full time, extending from one to four weeks over different periods of the junior and senior years. Most are conducted with an instructional team of resident intern teachers in a cooperating school district. During this time the student is under the guidance of a clinical professor and resident intern teachers.

It is during these periods of clinical experience that the undergraduate student sharpens his skills of observation and inquiry. Appying what he has learned from his academic studies, the prospective teacher is able to focus upon the processes of learning and the strategies used by the teacher to

promote learning. Perceptions are gained about children and their relationships with teachers. Students have the opportunity to diagnose individual learning problems and to manage group behavior. It is in these experiences that students place in perspective their assumptions about children, the nature of learning, process of education, and the proper role of the teacher.

Master's Level Program

In the fifth college year, each student participates in a year-long resident internship. As a member of an elementary school instructional team, each intern undertakes full responsibility for teaching in a cooperating elementary school. This internship is designed to permit each fifth-year student the opportunity to investigate in a very concrete way the general hypotheses that have grown out of his study, observation, and earlier involvement with children. It affords him the opportunity to refine his skills and practical insights into the nature of learning and to reinforce his commitment to the individualization of learning. The setting in which the resident internship takes place is particularly conducive to this kind of investigation. Cooperating school districts support resident interns in their attempts to create learning environments where individualized instuction can be effectively implemented.

Along with the resident internship each Master's degree candidate spends two summers in academic study. This Master's level portion of the academic program includes six areas:

> Classroom Strategies: Designs for Teaching and Learning
>
> For students who are either preparing for or completing an academic year resident internship. Those stategies used in organizing for an individualized elementary school classroom are examined, with students concentrating on those areas of greatest need and interest.

Resident Internship

A full-time, yearlong internship experience conducted in a cooperating school district. Interns are assigned as members of instructional teams with full responsibility for a portion of the cooperating school's instructional program. Prerequisites include participation in the summer program prior to the internship and elementary teacher certification.

Independent Research in Elementary Education

An individual research experience which is designed around a chosen project and which culminates in an Independent Study Report, required of all Master of Education degree candidates. The project and its accompanying research will focus upon a topic related to the elementary school, with the research being carried out during the period of internship.

Seminar in Elementary Education

A continuing seminar for all resident interns spanning the entire period of internship. The seminar will concentrate upon the resolution of those problems unique to each intern's specific teaching situation. It will be conducted in the cooperating districts and be organized cooperatively by the interns and clinical professors. The resources of the faculty will be drawn upon.

Creative Expression

A continuation of the undergraduate sequence in Creative Expression; will include an exploration of those areas that contribute to an enlarged understanding of the "humanizing" dimension of the educational process.

Human Responses to Environment

A continuation of the undergraduate sequence; designed to increase each student's awareness of those societal and cultural forces which influence the climate of education in North Dakota. Considered concomitantly are the special responsibilities of the schools and their teachers toward stimulating the minds of children to develop a vision of their own future.

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

The total New School effort is supported by a systematic program of research. The intent of the research studies is to determine the effectiveness of the teacher preparation program and the mode of instruction being introduced into the cooperating school districts. It is intended that both activities be moderated and modified as a result of the research data. The research will have four principle foci: (a) the impact of the teacher preparation program upon the students in the New School, (b) the impact of the resident interns upon the cooperating school district's pupils, other staff members, and supporting community, (c) the impact of the total program upon teacher preparation programs in the state colleges, (d) the generation of other working hypotheses that may warrant extensive further examination.

A primary focus of the research on the teaching introduced into the cooperating elementary schools is upon the teacher-pupil relationship. Other interpersonal relationships are also examined, both within the school and community. The instructional approach used by the resident interns is designed to modify those relationships in desired ways. The evidence should indicate what changes the individualized approach to teaching can be expected to produce over a period of time.

The analysis of video tapes that record teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil relationships and interaction will be used in the research studies. In addition to video-tape analyses, several other instruments will be employed. These include: attitude and value scales of members of instructional teams, to determine the

extent to which teacher personality is a factor in the teacher-pupil relationship; achievement battery for pupils, to determine the extent and rate of skill and information development in basic areas; measures of creative expression, including evidence from children's writing, art, sociodrama, and psychodramatic activity; and measure of several aspects of creative problem solving.

The focus of the research activity related to the teacher preparation program is twofold. First, it is aimed at determining the cultural breadth of the prospective and experienced teacher. Second, it is aimed at determining the potential teacher's competence in introducing more individualized modes of instruction into the classroom. One of the principle devices for measuring student behavior and progress will be video-tape studies of their performance in the classroom situation. Specifically, tapes that sample the students' teaching behavior and pupil relationships will be analyzed in the context of the social, emotional, cultural, and dialectological data. In addition to the video-tape studies, teacher interns will be examined on other relevant intellective and nonintellective factors.